

Message Text

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AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
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AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 30510

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: ROBERT FABRE -- GISCARD'S PROSPECTIVE CENTER-
LEFT POINT MAN FOR 1981

SUMMARY. IN ACCEPTING A SPECIAL MISSION ON UNEMPLOYMENT
FROM GISCARD D'ESTAING, ROBERT FABRE, FORMER PRESIDENT
OF THE LEFT RADICALS (MRG), HAS DONE WHAT NO OTHER LEFT
LEADER YET DARES -- HE HAS "COLLABORATED" WITH THE ENE-
MY. MAINTAINING ALL THE WHILE THAT HE IS AND WILL RE-
MAIN IN THE OPPOSITION, FABRE HAS SET OUT TO DEMONSTRATE
THAT CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT IS POSSI-
BLE. ALTHOUGH HIS MISSION TODAY IS QUITE LIMITED --
IDEAS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PART-TIME WORK, POSSIBILITIES
FOR A GRADUAL TRANSITION FROM ACTIVE LIFE INTO RETIRE-
MENT, MEANS FOR INSERTING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO PROFESSIONAL
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CAREERS -- BOTH FABRE AND GISCARD ARE REALLY AIMING AT
1981. IF ALL GOES WELL, I.E., IF FABRE'S MISSION CAN BE
CALLED SUCCESSFUL AND IF HE CAN MAINTAIN HIS OPPOSITION
CREDENTIALS IN THE PROCESS, FABRE PLANS TO BECOME THE
GISCARDIAN BRIDGEHEAD TO A PART OF THE CENTER-LEFT ELEC-
TORATE WHICH HAS THUS FAR ELUDED THE PRESIDENT. STILL
MORE A SYMBOL THAN A POLITICAL FORCE, ROBERT FABRE

HOPES TO PROVE BY 1981 THAT HE IS NOT A TRAITOR, BUT RATHER A MAN SEVERAL YEARS AHEAD OF HIS TIME. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FUTURE IS 1981: PIERRE BRACQUE, ARCHITECT OF ROBERT FABRE'S SPECIAL MISSION AND THE MAN WHO WILL HEAD FABRE'S STAFF FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS, MAKES NO SECRET OF FABRE'S AMBITIOUS OBJECTIVE -- TO BE THE POINT MAN IN 1981 FOR GISCARD'S CONQUEST OF PART OF THE CENTER-LEFT ELECTORATE. FABRE'S TRANSITION FROM OPPOSITION LEADER TO GISCARDIAN SUPPORTER WILL BE GRADUAL, IN ORDER TO PROTECT HIS LEFT CREDENTIALS, BUT THE CLEAR IMPLICATION OF BRACQUE'S ANALYSIS IS THAT ROBERT FABRE HAS ALREADY RALLIED IN SPIRIT TO THE FRENCH PRESIDENT, IF NOT IN BODY.

2. THE FIRST AND CRUCIAL STEP IN THIS DIFFICULT PROCESS OF TRANSITION IS A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION TO FABRE'S MISSION. ACCORDING TO BRACQUE, THERE IS ALMOST NO QUESTION OF FAILURE, I.E., THE GOF WILL ACCEPT SOME OF HIS PROPOSALS, AGREE TO STUDY OTHERS, ETC. EVEN SO, MUCH WILL DEPEND ON HOW RADICAL FABRE'S CONCLUSIONS ARE, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS ARGUING FOR MODERATION:

- BOTH GISCARD AND FABRE HAVE POLITICAL STAKES WHICH GREATLY OUTWEIGH SUBSTANTIVE CONSIDERATIONS;

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- ALTHOUGH CERTAIN TO PRESENT SOME IDEAS DRAWN FROM THE COMMON PROGRAM, FABRE HAS A FREER HAND NOW THAT HE HAS BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE MRG AND EXPELLED FROM THE SOCIALIST GROUP IN THE ASSEMBLY;
- HIS MISSION IS SO PRECISELY DEFINED THAT FABRE HAS NO MANDATE TO PROPOSE SWEEPING SOLUTIONS TO GRAND PROBLEMS. HE WILL THUS BE JUSTIFIED IN LIMITING HIMSELF MAINLY TO TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS WHICH ARE BY NATURE LESS REVOLUTIONARY.

3. IN ADDITION TO THE REQUIREMENT FOR "SUCCESS", IT IS IMPORTANT FOR BOTH FABRE AND GISCARD THAT FABRE RETAIN HIS OPPOSITION IMAGE BOTH DURING AND AFTER THE MISSION:

- FABRE'S CREDIBILITY AS A FUTURE CENTER-LEFT FOCAL POINT REQUIRES THAT HE REMAIN TECHNICALLY IN THE OPPOSITION, CERTAINLY OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT, UNTIL 1981;
- GISCARD HAS NO NEED OF FABRE INDIVIDUALLY, BUT LOOKS MORE AMBITIOUSLY AT THAT PART OF THE CENTER-LEFT ELECTORATE WHICH HIS MORE CONSERVATIVE UDF HAS NOT TOUCHED.

MOREOVER, ON A PURELY PERSONAL LEVEL, FEBRE'S CONSCIENCE
WILL BE SOOTHED BY A VERY SLOW TRANSITION FROM SPECIAL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 30510

EMISSARY TO OVERT SUPPORTER. RELUCTANT TO PLAY THE GIS-
CARDIAN GAME AT ALL (GUY GENNESSEAUX, ANOTHER FABRE IN-
SIDER WHOSE OWN FUTURE IS VERY MUCH TIED TO THAT OF HIS
BOSS, TELLS US THAT FABRE HAD TO BE PUSHED AT EVERY STEP
OF THE PROCESS), AND STUNG BY CHARGES OF OPPORTUNISM AND
TREASON, FABRE ALSO NEEDS THE MORAL VINDICATION OF HIS
MISSION'S SUCCESS. (REGARDLESS OF FABRE'S EVENTUAL
CLAIMS TO THE CONTRARY, HIS OPPONENTS ON THE LEFT ARE
ALMOST CERTAIN TO CLAIM THAT HE HAS BEEN HAD AND HAS IN
EFFECT ACHIEVED NOTHING OF REAL VALUE).

4. WHAT CAN ROBERT FABRE DO BETWEEN THE END OF HIS MIS-
SION NEXT SPRING AND THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN OF 1981?
EXCLUDED FROM THE MRG, HE HAS NO HOME IN ANY EXISTING
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POLITICAL FORMATION. GENNESSEAUX SOMETIMES TALKS (NOT VERY CONVINCINGLY) OF RECAPTURING THE MRG AT ITS DECEMBER CONGRESS, BUT BOTH HE AND BRACQUE AGREE THAT FABRE'S ULTIMATE ROLE WILL BE AS THE RALLYING POINT FOR A NEW POLITICAL FORCE REGROUPING THOSE ON THE LEFT WHO FAVOR "SOCIAL DEMOCRACY" (AND WHO BY DEFINITION EXCLUDE COOPERATION WITH THE PCF).

5. WHETHER OR NOT THIS FABRE-LED MOVEMENT TAKES SHAPE IN 1979 FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IS PROBLEMATIC, DEPENDING ON WHAT THE MRG DOES, WHETHER THE UDF SUCCEEDS IN PRESENTING A UNIFIED LIST, ETC. FABRE HIMSELF IS NOT ESPECIALLY KEEN TO LEAD A SEPARATE LIST, BUT COULD PROBABLY BE TALKED INTO IT. IN ANY CASE, HE CANNOT JOIN EITHER A UDF OR A PS LIST AND WOULD SIT OUT THE CONTEST RATHER THAN COMPROMISE HIS INDEPENDENT POSITION.

6. PRESIDENTIAL STRATEGY: ALL OF THIS MANEUVERING IS AIMED FINALLY AT 1981, WHEN FABRE PLANS TO HAVE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ASSURING VGE'S RE-ELECTION. THE FORMER MRG LEADER, AFTER FOUR YEARS OF UNCONDITIONAL OPPOSITION, NOW BELIEVES THAT GISCARD IS THE COUNTRY'S BEST, IF NOT ONLY, HOPE, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF A CONTINUED SOCIALIST COMMITMENT TO THE UNPROMISING STRATEGY OF ALLIANCE WITH THE PCF. THERE IS NO DOUBT SOME OPPORTUNISM IS INVOLVED IN HIS DECISION, BUT THERE IS ALSO A SENSE OF SERVING THE NATION IN HELPING TO BREAK DOWN SOME OF THE BARRIERS WHICH SEGMENT THE COUNTRY POLITICALLY. AS IN THE UNION OF THE LEFT, ROBERT FABRE IS AGAIN MORE OF A SYMBOL THAN A POLITICAL FORCE. BUT SYMBOLS IN FRANCE ARE SOMETIMES AS IMPORTANT AS SUBSTANCE AND ARE ON OCCASION PRECURSORS OF A FUTURE REALITY. THE FABRE PHENOMENON IN

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ITSELF DOES NOT COUNT FOR MUCH YET, BUT ADDED TO OTHER CHANGES WHICH COULD TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE OTHER PARTIES BEFORE 1981, ITS FINAL IMPACT COULD STILL BE MUCH GREATER THAN ANYONE NOW IMAGINES. IN THE SHORT TERM, HOWEVER, IT IS CLEARLY A RISKY VENTURE WHICH PROMISES SOME UNPLEASANT MOMENTS FOR ROBERT FABRE.

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